Oct—Nov 2026
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PIONEER ECHO

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR PAST

Port Phillip Pioneers Group

Newsletter No: 246


THE MELBOURNE
MORNING HERALD
EXTRAORDINARY.
GLORIOUS NEWS!
SEPARATION
AT LAST!!

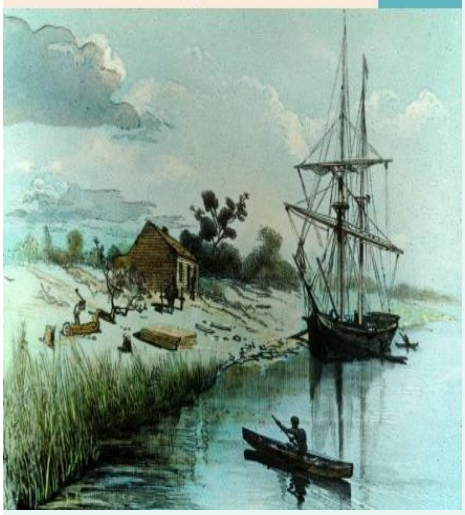


On August 5, 1850, the *Australian Constitutions Act* received Royal Assent from Queen Victoria, giving approval to separate the Port Phillip District from New South Wales to create the Colony of Victoria. It took months for the news to travel back to Australia, with the information finally becoming public knowledge on November 11, sparking four days of celebrations across Melbourne. The Separation would officially come into effect on July 1, 1851.

Great celebrations occurred under the canopy of the Separation Tree located in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. Sadly, the 400 year old landmark was vandalised in 2010 and 2013 resulting in the canopy and part of the trunk having to be removed but some of the original tree remains. But on a positive note, there are now 26 separate plantings of saplings of the original tree scattered around Victoria including one in the botanic gardens in Melbourne and another in the garden at Parliament House. A new plaque was added to the old shield sign in 1951, marking 100 years since separation, and again in 2001marking the 150th anniversary.

INVITATION

So come and watch the re-enactment of Lieutenant Governor Charles **LA TROBE'S** reading of the *Proclamation of Separation* at the Separation Tree, Botanic Gardens, Melbourne at 10.30 am on Friday 13 November 2026.



Above: Fawkner's *Enterprize* by Woodhouse and Schell, 1925: SLV

Left: *Separation at Last* newspaper headline
Source: Wikipedia
The Separation Tree plaque
source: http://slv.vic.gov.au

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THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Our next meeting is on Saturday 14 November 2026 beginning at 2 pm at Wesley Hall, St. Andrew's Uniting Church, 253A Burke Road (cnr. Malvern Road), Gardiner and as always, visitors are welcome. The only entry fee is $2.00 which is designed to cover the cost of the catering which follows at the end of the meeting.

If you cannot attend in person, you can watch on Zoom with the **Meeting ID: 824 5548 9580** and **Passcode: 821981**

Our guest speaker is Susan Ryan and her topic is: The Hood Clan - A family of 20 Port Phillip Pioneers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, with so many of the clan in the colony, there are many people to talk about. One, for example, was John Hood who was a chemist. His name appears on various committees including for example, the management of the building of 'an asylum" (and on its completion, he donated a glass bottle). In 2026, Melbourne is contemplating a new railway to its airport and in 1851, there was also a proposal to build a railway (perhaps not to an airport). Garryowen describes John Hood (and others) as "hardheaded businessmen" on that committee. Perhaps that is what Melbourne needs again? John Hood's contributions were also evident after the "Black Thursday" bushfires in February 1851 when a committee to collect relief money was formed. But, when not all of the funds were paid as compensation to fire victims, they were donated to various charities. John Hood and others were upset about the stinginess of the payments to the colonists affected and another committee was set up to re-disburse the money properly. At the meeting at which John Hood is recorded as being a participant, tempers flared and people had to step in to stop the meeting ending in a "pugilistic set to". Hood was also recorded as being a participant in the administration of the "Victorian Branch of the Australasian League". He was certainly a contributor.

This will be an interesting talk so don't miss it.

Paul Cronin

President

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

PPPG NO	MEMBER NAME	DESCENDED FROM	DETAILS	DATE	SHIP OR OTHER MEANS
1189	Jenny NIXON (returning member)				
6020 6021	Associate Members	Shane Smith Carrolyn Croft			

Address at the General Meeting on 12 September 2026

THE ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY IN VICTORIA

by Adam Wakeling

Our meeting on 12 September featured a presentation by Adam Wakeling on the origins of democracy in the Colony of New South Wales and the Port Phillip District as seen in the timeline below.



Adam explained that the New South Wales (NSW) and Van Dieman's Land settlements "*weren't administered with the usual references* [to the general principles of Colonial Policy] *which are applicable to other foreign possessions of His Majesty … Not having been established with any view to territorial or commercial advantages, they must chiefly be considered as receptacles for offenders….*" (Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, to John Bigge, 6 January 1819).

However, by the mid-nineteenth century NSW was rapidly transforming from a penal colony to a free-settler society. Adam explained how William Charles Wentworth's *Remonstrance Speech of 1851* was a catalyst in the British Government relenting in 1855 and the *NSW Constitution Act* being passed, granting the Colony of NSW the self-governing it had fought for. Wentworth's speech highlighted a critical turning point in Australian Constitutional history, where local leaders used British Policy shifts in Canada as leverage to demand responsible government (self-governing rights) for NSW.

On the 9 September 1836 the Port Phillip District was formally established which was an administrative division under the governance of the Colony of NSW.

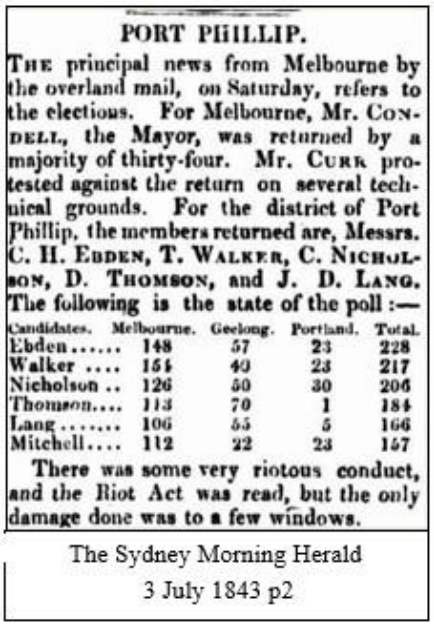
On the 5 August 1850, passed by the British Parliament and signed by Queen Victoria, the *Australian Constitution Act 1850* came into being which granted permission for the Port Phillip District to separate from NSW.

Just days after Separation, gold was discovered in central Victoria which resulted in a massive population boom and the resultant 1854 Eureka Stockade rebellion. The miners formed the Ballarat Reform League and demanded the right to vote and burned their licences in protest. In December that year, Government troops and police attacked the miners' wooden stockade at

Bakery Hill where 28 people died in the violent clash. A government inquiry led to the abolition of the gold licence, replaced by an affordable miner's right, and gave miners voting representation in parliament. The legacy of the rebellion was seen as the foundational moment in the development of Australian democracy. The following is a quote from an eyewitness, Raffaello Carboni, an Italian writer and miner, and participant of the Rebellion.

"The 'SOUTHERN CROSS' was hoisted up the flagstaff –... The maiden appearance of our standard, in the midst of armed men, sturdy, self-overworking gold-diggers of all languages and colours, was a fascinating object to behold." - Raffaello Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade* (1855).

During his presentation Adam made references to the Anti-transportation movement; the first Melbourne Elections when Edward **CURR** (Catholic) and Henry **CONDELL** (Protestant) sought election to the NSW Legislative Council which resulted in the reading of the Riot Act, and the eventual announcement at the Mechanics Institute (now the Athenaeum) of the successful candidate, Henry **CONDELL**. Adam mentioned the Victorian colonial election that took place in the Spring of 1856 (23 September – 24 October) which resulted in the establishment of the inaugural Parliament of Victoria. It was also the first time in the world that a government election was conducted using the secret ballot system. The invention of the locked ballot box system in Victoria and South Australia in 1856 required voters to place folded papers into a secure, locked box to prevent vote tampering.



PORT PHILLIP.

THE principal news from Melbourne by the overland mail, on Saturday, refers to the elections. For Melbourne, Mr. CONDELL, the Mayor, was returned by a majority of thirty-four. Mr. CURR protested against the return on several technical grounds. For the district of Port Phillip, the members returned are, Messrs. C. H. EBDEN, T. WALKER, C. NICHOLSON, D. THOMSON, and J. D. LANG. The following is the state of the poll :—

Candidates.	Melbourne.	Geelong.	Portland.	Total.
Ebden.....	148	57	23	228
Walker	154	40	23	217
Nicholson ..	126	50	30	206
Thomson....	113	70	1	184
Lang.....	106	55	5	166
Mitchell....	112	22	23	157

There was some very riotous conduct, and the Riot Act was read, but the only damage done was to a few windows.

The Sydney Morning Herald
3 July 1843 p2



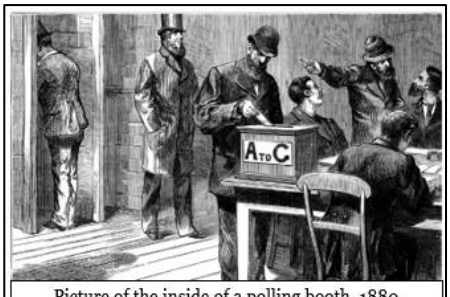
Women's Suffrage deputation to the Legislative Council of Victoria, Australia, 6 September 1898 (Source: SLV via Wikimedia Commons)

By 1908, the Adult Suffrage Bill was passed (after the Victorian Parliament rejected 19 earlier bills starting in 1889) which gave non-indigenous women in Victoria the right to vote. Victoria was the final Australian State to grant women voting rights for state parliament. Victorian women first cast votes in the 1911 state elections. Prominent campaigners for Women's Rights were Vida Goldstein, Miles Franklin and the1891 '*Monster Petition*" which carried 30,000 signatures.



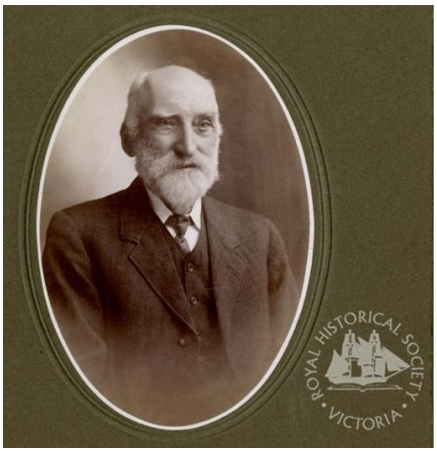
The Melbourne Athenaeum c1873
Source: NLA online

At the conclusion of his most informative address, Adam was presented with a certificate of thanks and a 12 month Associate Membership to the PPPG.



Picture of the inside of a polling booth, 1880
(per Adam Wakeling Presentation)

Middlemiss History - Perthshire to Port Phillip Bay



WILLIAM MIDDLEMISS was an agricultural labourer aged 18 when he boarded a ship destined for Australia. He was one of 241 immigrants arriving in Port Phillip Bay on the 29 June 1849 along with his parents **Thomas** (labourer) and **Janet** (housekeeper) **MIDDLEMISS**, and six siblings, **Robert** 16, **Thomas** 13**, James** 9, **Archibald** 7, **Janet** 3 and **Peter** 1. They were sponsored initially by **MR WATSON** to work on his Melbourne property. They left their homeland in Perthshire, Scotland to set sail from Gravesend, London on the ship *Saxon*, a barque of 833 tons, captained by John McLean, enduring three months at sea.

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) holds a handwritten diary of William's reminiscences of his first experiences in Port Phillip Bay, having arrived at Liardet's Beach, now known as Port Melbourne and disembarking from the sailing ship *Saxon* and wading ashore with his belongings. Once ashore, William managed to secure a dray pulled by four bullocks, to convey him and his belongings to the area, now known as Brighton, where the owner Frederick **LIARDET** had a residence and employed William to cart supplies such as flour into the developing area where the tracks were muddy and potholed. The RHSV states that '*the written account is of significant social and historical importance, as it provides insightful observations of migration to Melbourne on a sailing ship. There are also comments made about the seven deaths that occurred during the voyage and a sparse account of a passenger being punished for misconduct*."

William detailed his travels throughout Victoria and mentioned his relative Hugh **MIDDLEMISS**, who had arrived years earlier than him and opened the first hotel between Melbourne and Albury called the *Salutation Inn* after a Perthshire, Scotland establishment of the same name, where it was recorded that Charles Edward Stuart, known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, planned his battle strategies from within its walls in 1745.

William **MIDDLEMISS** became a pastoralist with sheep farming after trying his luck at gold prospecting near the Goulburn River. He settled at Avenel near Seymour and in 1858, married Frances McGorman. They moved to a property called *Fern Hill* at Kyneton, Victoria. Nearby was a place called *Dunira*, most likely named after his birthplace somewhere near the Dunira in Perthshire, Scotland. They had four sons and three daughters who stayed in the area. William reached the age of 90, dying on the 18 October 1921 and was buried at the Tylden cemetery, Victoria. He had been a local councillor for the District and it was stated that he was the oldest Justice of the Peace for the area.

A newspaper article held by the National Library of Australia displays in print a portrait and describes William's life.

Perthshire in Scotland and the English border region of Berwick Upon Tweed, Northumberland is where the name Middlemiss has its origins belonging to Middlemestlands centred near Kelso. The spelling of the name has changed many times from Middlemist to Middlemast and shortened to Middlemis over the centuries as families immigrated to Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The family motto is “Forward”.

Many of the Middlemiss clans aligned themselves in their new countries by marrying back into surnames that they were familiar with from their homeland towns. There are many generations who carry the name Robert Bell Middlemiss. The Bell family were from Perthshire, and naming patterns followed a particular formula. In Euroa, **HUGH MIDDLEMISS** was remembered by his friend William Beaton, who originally came from Scotland, naming his first born son, Hugh Middlemiss Beaton. My sister married into the Beaton family connected to Euroa and I married into the Middlemiss family connecting back to Perthshire and the Borders of Scotland. Researching the history and looking at census records, I found many similarities in their occupations becoming farmers, brewers and landlords of inns and storekeepers. Occupations they continued to pursue in Australia.

In the Longwood Cemetery Victoria, you will find the grave of Hugh **MIDDLEMISS** along with two more Middlemiss graves, one being Robina Middlemiss who married Alexander Smith, a butcher in the town in 1865. She died on the 31 December 1889 aged 66. They were listed as storekeepers; the second being for Ellen **MIDDLEMISS**. Helen (Ellen) came to Australia ten years before Robina and died unmarried in 1863 aged 43. Robina Middlemiss was the executrix of Ellen **MIDDLEMISS**, storekeeper, of Longwood who was insolvent at the time of her death. Her sister Robina arranged for a headstone for her grave. They were closely related to Hugh and William, as they came from Perthshire.



ERECTED BY
ROBINA MIDDLEMISS
IN MEMORY
OF HER SISTER
HELEN MIDDLEMISS
LATE OF SCONE PERTHSHIRE
SCOTLAND
WHO DIED JUNE 24, 1863
AGED 45 YEARS

Middlemiss descendants are spread around Victoria living mostly in Kyneton and Lauriston, Trentham and Maldon, Woodend and Longwood.

Many newspaper articles and obituaries acknowledge William **MIDDLEMISS** and his relatives for their pioneering contribution to these areas. They demonstrated fortitude with farming initiatives and assisted communities by running for local government. Perhaps they are best known for establishing hotels in country Victoria, where weary travellers could rest and water their livestock, while enroute to the goldfields.

Contributed by Kay Middlemiss Associate Member No. 6013

CHRISTMAS

From the Editor: As this is the final issue of the *Pioneer Echo* for 2026, I would like to wish all members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New from the PPPG committee and volunteers, and when you are enjoying the festivities with family and friends, and partaking in special holiday tidings, spare a thought for those celebrating in a very different manner in the Port Phillip District as described in *the Port Phillip Gazette and Settler's Journal* Tuesday 27 November 1849, page 4;

CHRISTMAS SPORTS

" Christmas comes but once a year. And when it comes it brings good cheer."

HENRY CONWAY,
TRAVELLERS REST,
Collingwood,
RESPECTFULLY invites all lovers of fun and frolic to the

UNRIVALLED SPORTS

with which BOXING DAY will be celebrated at his establishment. The commencement will be

A GOAT RACE

in which eight thorough-bred Billy-goats will run for half a mile: each regularly caparisoned with saddle, bridle, etc and ridden by a boy all booted and spurred; several hurdle leaps to be taken in rare Newmarket style.

The feat of *climbing the GREASY POLE*,
Prize, a silver watch, is the next part of the performance: after which a

PIGEON SHOOTING MATCH

will take place under the superintendence of an old sportsman. Rewards will be distributed to the best marksmen. After which

THE RAT HUNT

commences, a new sport in Australia. Rogers, the celebrated rat-catcher of Van Dieman's Land, is preparing a suitable number of his pets for the occasion. Much sport may be anticipated.

The pig with the greasy tail, and many other

OLD ENGLISH GAMES,

will wind up the day, which will be one of the pleasantest Boxing Days ever spent in Port Phillip

A Large Pavillion is in course of erection for the occasion. A Splendid Lunch Gratis, and the services of an excellent Band of Music are secured for the happy day. Fireworks in the Evening, etc, etc."

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Saturday: 14 November 2026
Speaker: Susan Ryan
Topic: The HOOD Clan – a family of 20 Port Phillip Pioneers

Saturday: 13 March 2027
Speaker: Prof. Neville Yeomans
Topic: Early Melbourne Healthcare Practices

Saturday: 8 May 2027
Speaker: Dr. Andrew Kilsby
Topic: Redcoats: The British Army in Australia Felix 1838-1851

MEETING VENUE

Hall Entry: $2.00

Doors Open: 1.30 pm. Sign in. Time to browse notice board, borrow library books and chat.

Meeting Starts: 2.00 pm.

Guest Speaker:2.30 pm.

Afternoon Tea:3.30 pm.

Venue: Wesley Hall, St. Andrew's Uniting Church, cnr Burke and Malvern Roads, Gardiner.

Melways Reference: Map 59 H7.
Or Online via **Zoom** digital platform

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